

News Organizations Say They Find No Evidence Their Employees Maintained C.I.A. Relationships

By JOHN M. CREWDSON

Most of the news-gathering organizations whose employees, according to a forthcoming article in Rolling Stone magazine, maintained confidential relationships with the Central Intelligence Agency over the last 25 years, said yesterday that they had been unable to find evidence of any such arrangements.

A few of the organizations, including The Washington Post and CBS News, said that they preferred to study the article, by Carl Bernstein, a former Post reporter, before commenting on the allegations it contains.

But executives for NBC News, ABC News, The New York Times, The Associated Press, Time and Newsweek magazines and others all said that they were unaware in some cases after having conducted internal inquiries that any of their correspondents had ever knowingly gathered information for or acted as operatives of the C.I.A.

Although Mr. Bernstein's article contained the names of more than a dozen organizations that allegedly "cooperated" in some manner with the intelligence agency, only a handful of the 400 American journalists said to have provided such cooperation were identified.

Unidentified C.I.A. Sources

The article, based mainly on assertions from unidentified past and present officials of the C.I.A., said the agency's purported relationship with The Times was by far its most valuable among newspapers.

Between 1950 and 1966, the article said, "about 100 C.I.A. agents had been admitted under an agreement between Arthur Hays Sulzberger, the newspaper's publisher, and the C.I.A. to pose as Times employees, presumably overseas." Phyllis Ochs Sulzberger, the widow of Mr. Sulzberger, called The Times yesterday to say that Mr. Sulzberger had told her he had been approached by the C.I.A. with a request to use The New York Times as cover.

Mrs. Sulzberger said her husband had told her that he had refused on grounds that it would be journalistically unethical and would endanger the safety of foreign correspondents.

Mrs. Sulzberger said her husband had made it clear to her that his refusal applied to the use of New York Times correspondents by the C.I.A. or the granting of Times cover to C.I.A. employees or agents posing as journalists.

Sydney Gruson, executive vice president of The New York Times Company, said in a statement issued in response to the Rolling Stone article that the newspaper had "no record or knowledge whatsoever of any such arrangements with the C.I.A."

"We have been unable to find any

employee or officer of the Company who knows of any agreements, formal or informal, written or verbal, with any intelligence agency of the Government," Mr. Gruson said.

He added that The Times was taking steps to renew its request, under the Freedom of Information Act, first made in January of last year, for any information in the C.I.A.'s files that bore on allegations of relationships between it and any of the newspaper's employees.

The C.I.A. declined last year to say whether any such information existed on the ground that to do so might endanger the agency's sources and methods.

Mrs. Gruson acted in behalf of Arthur Ochs Sulzberger, publisher of The Times, who is traveling out of the country.

Although none of the other news organizations that were asked for comment yesterday, on the Rolling Stone article, disclosed any plans to pursue the matter under the Freedom of Information Act, most of them were unequivocal in their denials.

William Sheehan, senior vice president of ABC News, which Mr. Bernstein said had provided cover for C.I.A. employees through the 1960's, said that he had talked at length with former news executives there and had concluded that there was no arrangement by this company to provide cover for the C.I.A.

A spokesman for NBC News said: "We know of no case where an NBC news correspondent ever undertook an assignment for the C.I.A. It has always been NBC News policy not to do this and the correspondents were aware of the policy."

Edward Kosmen, managing editor of Newsweek magazine, said that that publication's policy, and it's been our policy as long as I've been around here, is that Newsweek employees work for Newsweek and Newsweek only.

Check by Scripps-Howard

Edward W. Estlow, president of the Scripps-Howard newspaper chain, said his company had previously looked into reports that it might have had an affiliation with the C.I.A. and had concluded that no one now employed there "has, or had, a C.I.A. connection."

Charles Olf, the editor and general manager of the California-based Copley News Service, said he had been assured by the C.I.A. that no payments of any kind have ever been made by the C.I.A. to a Copley News Service employee.

Among the journalists named by Mr. Bernstein as having entered into some sort of secret agreement with the C.I.A. were Joseph Alsop, the syndicated columnist; Mr. Alsop's late brother, Stewart, also a columnist; and G. L. Sulzberger, foreign affairs columnist for The Times, whom Mr. Bernstein described as "still regarded as an active asset by the agency."

Mr. Sulzberger, who is vacationing in Greece, said in a statement issued

through The Times yesterday that although he had not had an opportunity to read the article, "any allegation that I ever worked in any capacity for the C.I.A. is false."

"I have been a professional newspaperman all my adult life, and hope I have been more careful in ascertaining—or seeking to ascertain—the truth of what I write than certain modern practitioners of the old school of muck-raking."

Reached by telephone at his home on Spetsais, Mr. Sulzberger said that the charge in Mr. Bernstein's article "enrages me—it already handicaps me in traveling to many countries that I'm used to visiting on the most amiable terms."

The columnist described Arthur Hays Sulzberger, his late uncle, as "one of the most honorable men I've ever encountered," and he recalled an instance in April 1942 when wartime American intelligence officials had asked Mr. Sulzberger whether he would place the entire staff of The New York Times at their disposal.

"He gave them a categorical no," he said.

Mr. Sulzberger said that although he could not say for certain that he had never entered into an agreement offered by the C.I.A. that would have permitted him access to some classified information, "I would bet 50 to one that I never signed it."

Asked whether he had ever gathered intelligence abroad at the specific request of the C.I.A., Mr. Sulzberger replied, "Absolutely not." Asked whether the late Mr. Sulzberger had ever indicated that anyone employed by The Times might have done so, he replied "Certainly not."

And he dismissed an assertion in the Bernstein article that he had once caused to be published in The Times under his byline a report prepared for him by the C.I.A. as "a lot of baloney."

Shared World Views

Mr. Sulzberger did say that he had known personally every director of Central Intelligence since Allen Dulles, who took over that job in 1953, some of them rather well, and that he had frequently provided them with his views on world affairs gleaned from his travels, something he would continue in the future if requested.

"Sure I would," he said. "I've never met this guy Turner [Adm. Stansfield Turner, the current Director of Central Intelligence] but if I were having lunch with him and he said 'What do you think's going to happen in the Horn of Africa?' is that sharing information?"

Robert Hummerstone, a spokesman for CBS, said that executives there were "not going to comment until the article's published and we have a chance to look at it and study it."

Earlier Disclosure on C.B.S.

The Times reported last year, however, that Austin Goodrich, a retired C.I.A. officer who operated for many years under what the agency terms "deep

cover," had been employed by CBS as a writer of radio news scripts during part of his career with the intelligence agency.

In the Rolling Stone article, which will appear in that magazine's issue of Oct. 4, Mr. Bernstein said that the C.I.A.'s purported arrangement with CBS, which he described as the agency's "most valuable broadcasting asset," had been struck with the approval of William Paley, chairman of the CBS board.

But Richard Salant, the president of CBS News, said yesterday that he had never seen any evidence that Mr. Paley was aware of such an arrangement.

Early last year, George Bush, then the Director of Central Intelligence, announced that the C.I.A. would no longer employ Bernstein as having entered into some sort of arrangement with any full-time or part-time news correspondent accredited by any U.S. news service, newspaper, periodical, radio or television network or station.

A C.I.A. spokesman said today that his agency's position would continue to be that it would not disclose now or in the future the names of any journalists who had lent the agency their cooperation. Among the other news organizations named by Mr. Bernstein as allegedly having entered into covert relationships with the C.I.A., executives of Reuters, United Press International, The Miami Herald and the Hearst chain of newspapers all said that they had no knowledge that any of the allegations were true.

Text of the Times's Request to C.I.A.

Following is the text of a letter sent yesterday by Sydney Gruson, executive vice president of The New York Times Company, to the Central Intelligence Agency requesting information on any possible relationships between the agency and Times employees.

Carl Bernstein has written an article for Rolling Stone magazine to be published in early October, which reports that Arthur Hays Sulzberger, former publisher of The New York Times, entered into a confidentiality agreement with the C.I.A. and established a policy of cooperation which included an agreement to provide employment cover for C.I.A. employees. The article also purports to describe relationships between named and unnamed New York Times correspondents and the C.I.A. Mr. Bernstein cites as one of his sources for this information "documents on file at C.I.A. headquarters."

The Times has no knowledge of any such agreements or relationships. In 1976 we made several requests and appeals to the C.I.A. under the Freedom of Information Act, in which we sought whatever information existed in C.I.A. files regarding any such past or current relationships between The Times or its employees and the C.I.A. In response to each of those requests and appeals the C.I.A. refused to confirm or deny any such past relationships or to release any names of persons who may have had such relationships or agreements with the C.I.A.

The C.I.A.'s persistent refusal to dis-

close in full its relationships with the news media has placed The Times and its employees in an untenable position. Allegations have been made and suspicions have been aroused. The American public is confused and some foreign governments are using this situation as a weapon against the press. These suspicions have been heightened by Mr. Bernstein's article. The work of correspondents has been hindered and, because we have been denied access to our only source of authoritative information, we are unable to present all the facts to the public.

We are, therefore, urgently renewing our previous requests under the Freedom of Information Act as amended (5 USC Section 552) and extending those requests to include any and all information you may have regarding any relationships between The New York Times or its employees, past or present, part or full-time, and the C.I.A.

For the specific content of our prior requests we refer you to our letters from Mr. Clifton Daniel dated January 23, 1976, from Mr. A. M. Rosenthal dated January 27, 1976 and from Mr. Arthur O. Sulzberger dated February 4, 1976, copies of which are attached.